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Education Policy in British Tropical Africa.

Memorandum submitted to the Secretary of State for the Colonies by the Advisory Committee on Native Education in the British Tropical African Dependencies.

Presented by the Secretary of State for the Colonies to Parliament by Command of His Majesty, March, 1925.

LONDON:
PUBLISHED BY HIS MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE.

To be purchased directly from H.M. STATIONERY OFFICE at the following addresses:
Adastral House, Kingsway, London, W.C.2; 28, Abingdon Street, London, S.W.1;
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1925.

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Cmd. 2374.

Advisory Committee

EDUCATION POLICY IN BRITISH TROPICAL AFRICA

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON NATIVE EDUCATION IN THE BRITISH TROPICAL AFRICAN DEPENDENCIES.

Appointed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 24th November, 1923.

Terms of Reference :—

"To advise the Secretary of State on any matters of Native Education in the British Colonies and Protectorates in Tropical Africa which he may from time to time refer to them ; and to assist him in advancing the progress of education in those Colonies and Protectorates."

The Honourable W. G. A. Ormsby-Gore, M.P., Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies (*Chairman*).
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Colonial Office,
Downing Street, S.W.1.
13*th March*, 1925.

Sir,

The Advisory Committee on Native Education in British Tropical Africa, which was established by the Duke of Devonshire in June, 1923, submits for your consideration the enclosed memorandum on educational policy in British Tropical Africa.

During the past eighteen months the Committee has been engaged upon the examination of educational activities in all the Colonies, Protectorates, and Mandated Territories in East and West Africa, and in particular in the Gold Coast, Southern Nigeria, and Uganda.

The Committee have come to the conclusion that the time is opportune for some public statement of principles and policy which would prove a useful guide to all those engaged, directly or indirectly, in the advancement of native education in Africa. They are of opinion that such a statement will be particularly welcome to Directors of Education and to missionary bodies, who are playing such a large part in educational activities.

This memorandum represents the results of mature consideration by members of the Committee, and they suggest, for your approval,

that the memorandum should be issued forthwith as a Parliamentary Paper. We suggest this form of publicity as there is growing interest in the problems with which it deals in Parliament and in educational circles in this country as well as in Africa.

We accordingly invite your acceptance of the memorandum and hope you will see your way to authorise its immediate publication.

W. ORMSBY-GORE,
Chairman,
Advisory Committee on Native Education in Tropical Africa.

Secretary of State for the Colonies.

MEMORANDUM.

Educational Policy in British Tropical Africa.

As a result on the one hand of the economic development of the British African Dependencies, which has placed larger revenues at the disposal of the Administrations, and on the other hand of the fuller recognition of the principle that the Controlling Power is responsible as trustee for the moral advancement of the native population, the Governments of these territories are taking an increasing interest and participation in native education, which up to recent years has been largely left to the Mission Societies.

In view of the widely held opinion that the results of education in Africa have not been altogether satisfactory, and with the object of creating a well-defined educational policy, common to this group of Dependencies—comprising an area of over 2½ million square miles with a population of approximately 40 million—the Secretary of State decided in 1923 to set up an Advisory Committee on Education in British Tropical Africa.

The Committee feels that it has now reached a point at which it is possible to formulate the broad principles which in its judgment should form the basis of a sound educational policy, and with the approval of His Majesty's Government, set forth these views to the local Governments, together with some indication of the methods by which they should be applied.

The following outline has accordingly been drawn up. Supplementary memoranda on special subjects may be added from time to time.

Encouragement and Control of Voluntary Educational Effort.

Government welcomes and will encourage all voluntary educational effort which conforms to the general policy. But it reserves to itself the general direction of educational policy and the supervision of all Educational Institutions, by inspection and other means.

Co-operation.

Co-operation between Government and other educational agencies should be promoted in every way. With this object Advisory Boards of Education should be set up in each Dependency upon which such agencies and others who have experience in social welfare should be accorded representation. These Boards would be advisory to the Government, and would include senior officials of the

Medical, Agricultural, and Public Works Departments, together with missionaries, traders, settlers, and representatives of native opinion, since education is intimately related to all other efforts, whether of Government or of citizens, for the welfare of the community. The Board should be supplemented in the provinces by Educational Committees.

Adaptation to Native Life.

Education should be adapted to the mentality, aptitudes, occupations and traditions of the various peoples, conserving as far as possible all sound and healthy elements in the fabric of their social life; adapting them where necessary to changed circumstances and progressive ideas, as an agent of natural growth and evolution. Its aim should be to render the individual more efficient in his or her condition of life, whatever it may be, and to promote the advancement of the community as a whole through the improvement of agriculture, the development of native industries, the improvement of health, the training of the people in the management of their own affairs, and the inculcation of true ideals of citizenship and service. It must include the raising up of capable, trustworthy, public-spirited leaders of the people, belonging to their own race. Education thus defined will narrow the hiatus between the educated class and the rest of the community whether chiefs or peasantry. As a part of the general policy for the advancement of the people every department of Government concerned with their welfare or vocational teaching—including especially the departments of Health, Public Works, Railways, Agriculture—must co-operate closely in the educational policy. The first task of education is to raise the standard alike of character and efficiency of the bulk of the people, but provision must also be made for the training of those who are required to fill posts in the administrative and technical services, as well as of those who as chiefs will occupy positions of exceptional trust and responsibility. As resources permit, the door of advancement, through higher education, in Africa must be increasingly opened for those who by character, ability and temperament show themselves fitted to profit by such education.

Religion and Character Training.

The central difficulty in the problem lies in finding ways to improve what is sound in indigenous tradition. Education should strengthen the feeling of responsibility to the tribal community, and, at the same time, should strengthen will power; should make the conscience sensitive both to moral and intellectual truth; and should impart some power of discriminating between good and evil, between reality and superstition. Since contact with civilization—and even education itself—must necessarily tend to weaken tribal authority and the sanctions of existing beliefs, and in view of the all-prevailing belief in the supernatural which affects the whole life of the African it is essential that what is good in the old beliefs and sanctions should be strengthened and what is defective should be replaced. The greatest importance must therefore be attached to religious teaching and moral instruction. Both in schools and in training colleges they should be accorded an equal standing with secular subjects. Such teaching must be related to the conditions of life and to the daily experience of the pupils. It should find expression in

habits of self-discipline and loyalty to the community. With such safeguards, contact with civilization need not be injurious, or the introduction of new religious ideas have a disruptive influence antagonistic to constituted secular authority. History shows that devotion to some spiritual ideal is the deepest source of inspiration in the discharge of public duty. Such influences should permeate the whole life of the school. One such influence is the discipline of work. Field games and social recreations and intercourse are influences at least as important as class-room instruction. The formation of habits of industry, of truthfulness, of manliness, of readiness for social service and of disciplined co-operation, is the foundation of character. With wise adaptation to local conditions such agencies as the Boy Scout and Girl Guide Movements can be effectively utilised provided that good Scout Masters are available. The most effective means of training character in these ways is the residential school in which the personal example and influence of the teachers and of the older pupils—entrusted with responsibility and disciplinary powers as monitors—can create a social life and tradition in which standards of judgment are formed and right attitudes acquired almost unconsciously through imbibing the spirit and atmosphere of the school.

The Educational Service.

The rapid development of our African Dependencies on the material and economic side demands and warrants a corresponding advance in the expenditure on education. Material prosperity without a corresponding growth in the moral capacity to turn it to good use constitutes a danger. The well-being of a country must depend in the last resort on the character of its people, on their increasing intellectual and technical ability, and on their social progress. A policy which aims at the improvement of the condition of the people must therefore be a primary concern of Government and one of the first charges on its revenue. But success in realising the ideals of education must depend largely on the outlook of those who control policy and on their capacity and enthusiasm. It is essential, therefore, that the status and conditions of service of the Education Department should be such as to attract the best available men, both British and African. By such men only can the policy contemplated in this memorandum be carried into effect. It is open to consideration whether a closer union between the administrative and educational branches of the service would not conduce to the success of the policy advocated. Teachers from Great Britain should be enabled to retain their superannuation benefits, and to continue their annual superannuation contributions, during short service appointments to approved posts in Africa.

Grants-in-Aid.

The policy of encouragement of voluntary effort in education has as its corollary the establishment of a system of grants-in-aid to schools which conform to the prescribed regulations and attain the necessary standard. Provided that the required standard of educational efficiency is reached, aided schools should be regarded as filling a place in the scheme of education as important as the schools conducted by Government itself. The utilisation of efficient voluntary agencies economises the revenues available for educational purposes.

The conditions under which grants-in-aid are given should not be dependent on examination results.

Study of Vernaculars, Teaching and Text Books.

The study of the educational use of the vernaculars is of primary importance. The Committee suggests co-operation among scholars, with aid from Governments and Missionary Societies, in the preparation of vernacular text-books. The content and method of teaching in all subjects, especially History and Geography, should be adapted to the conditions of Africa. Text-books prepared for use in English schools should be replaced where necessary by others better adapted, the foundations and illustrations being taken from African life and surroundings. Provision will need to be made for this by setting aside temporarily men possessing the necessary qualifications. In this work co-operation should be possible between the different Dependencies with resulting economy.

Native Teaching Staff.

The Native Teaching Staff should be adequate in numbers, in qualifications, and in character, and should include women. The key to a sound system of education lies in the training of teachers, and this matter should receive primary consideration. The principles of education laid down in this memorandum must be given full and effective expression in institutions for the training of teachers of all grades, if those principles are to permeate and vitalize the whole educational system. The training of teachers for village schools should be carried out under rural conditions, or at least with opportunities of periodical access to such conditions, where those who are being trained are in direct contact with the environment in which their work has to be done. This purpose can often best be served by the institution of normal classes under competent direction in intermediate or middle rural schools. Teachers for village schools should, when possible, be selected from pupils belonging to the tribe and district who are familiar with its language, traditions and customs. The institution of such classes in secondary and intermediate schools should be supplemented by the establishment of separate institutions for the training of teachers and by vacation courses, and teachers' conferences.

Since in the early stages of educational development the training given to teachers must necessarily be very elementary, it is indispensable, if they are to do effective work, that they should from time to time be brought back for further periods of training—say every five years. The greater efficiency which would result from this system might be expected to compensate for any consequent reduction in the number of teachers which financial considerations might render necessary.

Visiting Teachers.

As a means of improving village schools and of continuing the training of their teachers, the system of specially trained visiting (or itinerant) teachers is strongly to be commended. Such teachers must be qualified to enter sympathetically into the problems of education in rural areas. Visiting the schools in rotation, they will remain some time with each, showing the local teacher out of their wider experience how a particular task should be done, or a better method introduced. By bringing to the village schools new ideas and fresh

inspiration and encouragement they will infuse vitality into the system. As far as possible the visiting teacher should be of the same tribe as the pupils in the group of schools he visits, knowing their language and customs. The visiting teachers should be prepared to learn as well as to teach. They should be brought together annually for conference and exchange of experiences.

Inspection and Supervision.

A thorough system of supervision is indispensable for the vitality and efficiency of the educational system. The staff of Government Inspectors must be adequate, and their reports should be based on frequent and unhurried visits and not primarily on the results of examinations. It is their duty to make the educational aims understood and to give friendly advice and help in carrying them out.

Each mission should be encouraged to make arrangements for the effective supervision of its own system of schools, but such supervision should not supersede Government inspection.

Technical Training.

Technical industrial training (especially mechanical training with power-driven machinery) can best be given in Government workshops, provided that an Instructor for Apprentices is appointed to devote his entire time to them; or in special and instructional workshops on a production basis. The skilled artisan must have a fair knowledge of English and Arithmetic before beginning his apprenticeship in order that he may benefit by instruction and be able to work to dimensional plans. Instruction in village crafts must be clearly differentiated from the training of the skilled mechanic.

Vocational Training.

Apprentices and "Learners" in vocations other than industrial should be attached to every Government department, *e.g.*, Medical, Agricultural, Forestry, Veterinary, Survey, Post Office (telegraphy), etc., and should, as a general rule, sign a bond to complete the prescribed course of instruction together, if so required, with a prescribed period of subsequent service. It should be the aim of the educational system to instil into pupils the view that vocational (especially the industrial and manual) careers are no less honourable than the clerical, and of Governments to make them at least as attractive—and thus to counteract the tendency to look down on manual labour.

Education of Girls and Women.

It is obvious that better education of native girls and women in Tropical Africa is urgently needed, but it is almost impossible to over-state the delicacy and difficulties of the problem. Much has already been done, some of it wise, some of it—as we now see—unwise. More should be done at once (not least in regard to the teaching of personal and domestic hygiene), but only those who are intimately acquainted with the needs of each Colony and, while experienced in using the power of education, are also aware of the subtlety of its social reactions, can judge what it is wise to attempt in each of the different Dependencies.

We are impressed by the fact that mere generalisations on the subject are not needed and may be misleading. In regard to the education of its girls and women, Tropical Africa presents not one

problem, but many. Differences in breed and in tribal tradition should guide the judgment of those who must decide what it is prudent to attempt. (*a*) Clever boys, for whom higher education is expedient, must be able to look forward to educated mates. (*b*) The high rate of infant mortality in Africa, and the unhygienic conditions which are widely prevalent make instruction in hygiene and public health, in the care of the sick and the treatment of simple diseases, in child welfare and in domestic economy, and the care of the home, among the first essentials, and these, wherever possible, should be taught by well qualified women teachers. (*c*) Side by side with the extension of elementary education for children, there should go enlargement of educational opportunities for adult women as well as for adult men. Otherwise there may be a breach between the generations, the children losing much that the old traditions might have given them, and the representatives of the latter becoming estranged through their remoteness from the atmosphere of the new education. To leave the women of a community untouched by most of the manifold influences which pour in through education, may have the effect either of breaking the natural ties between the generations or of hardening the old prejudices of the elder women. Education is a curse rather than a blessing if it makes women discontented or incompetent. But the real difficulty lies in imparting any kind of education which has not a disintegrating and unsettling effect upon the people of the country. The hope of grappling with this difficulty lies in the personality and outlook of the teachers.

Female education is not an isolated problem, but is an integral part of the whole question and cannot be separated from other aspects of it.

Organisation of School System.

School systems in their structure will rightly vary according to local conditions. It is suggested that when completed a school system would embody the following educational opportunities so far as the conditions prevalent in the Colony or District allow :—

(*a*) Elementary education both for boys and girls, beginning with the education of young children.

(*b*) Secondary or intermediate education, including more than one type of school and several types of curricula.

(*c*) Technical and vocational schools.

(*d*) Institutions, some of which may hereafter reach University rank and many of which might include in their curriculum some branches of professional or vocational training, *e.g.*, training of teachers, training in medicine, training in agriculture.

(*e*) Adult Education. This, which is still in an experimental stage, will vary according to local need. But it is recommended that those responsible for the administration of each Colony should keep adult education constantly in view in relation to the education of children and young people. The education of the whole community should advance *pari passu*, in order to avoid, as far as possible, a breach in good tribal traditions by interesting the older people in the education of their children for the welfare of the community.

March, 1925.

Printed under the authority of His Majesty's Stationery Office
by the South Essex Recorders, Ltd., High Road, Ilford.

(5337) Wt. 27630—1418 1,500 3/25. S.E.R., Ltd. **Gp. 56**